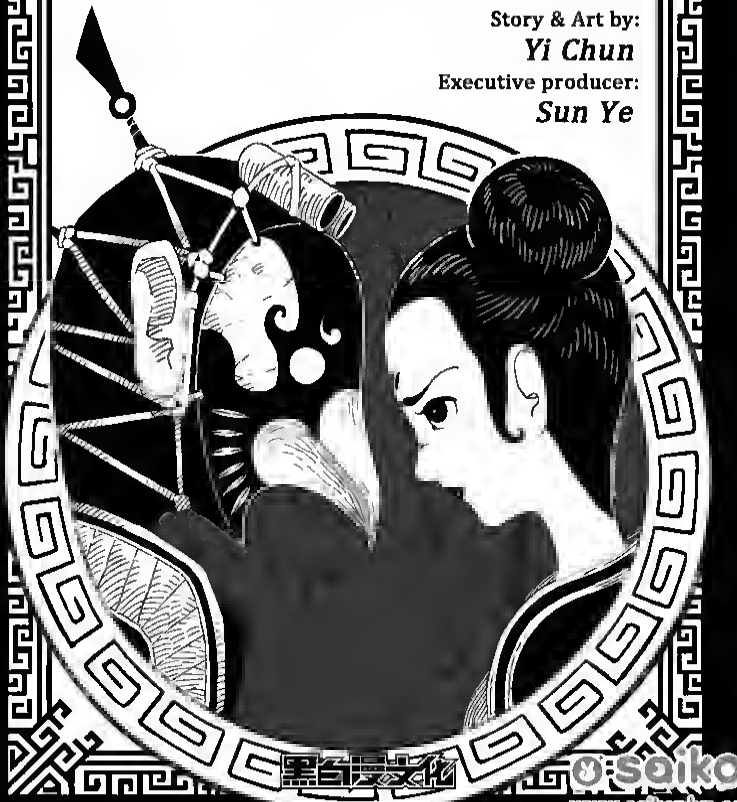
刺仇雀鸟

FEATHERED ASSASSINS

THE GOLDEN SPARROW

9

Story & Art by:
Yi Chun
Executive producer:
Sun Ye



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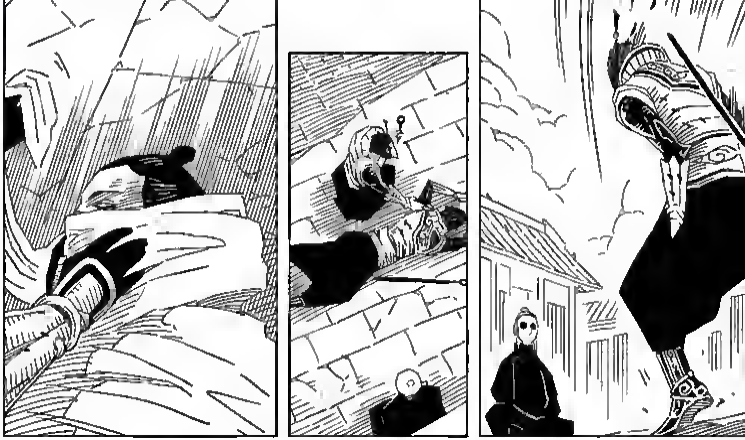

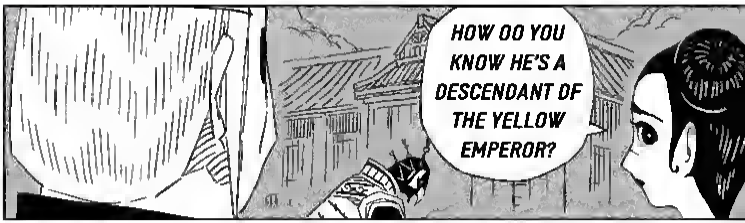

I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL YAN PO APPEARS.
THESE WERE THE WISHES OF OUR FORBEARERS. ALL OF THE DESCEHDANTS OF THE HUANG IMPERIAL FAMILY MUST NAME THEMSELVES AFTER A WORD IN THE FAMILY MAXIM:

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IF THAT MAN JUST NOW REALLY WAS THE GOLDEN SPARROW, HIS NAME WOULD ONLY MAKE SENSE IF HE CAME AFTER THE 18TH GENERATION.
BUT HE SAID HE WAS 16TH GENERATION. IT DIDN'T MATCH UP AT ALL!
THE GOLDEN SPARROW, AS AN 18TH GENERATION, USED THE WORD "REST" (ED: XIU).
HENCE HIS NAME HUANG XIU IS MOST FITTING.
I'M THE 14TH GENERATION, SO I USED THE WORD "APPEARS" (ED: CHU)
SO I'M CALLED HUANG CHU.
IF I HADN'T ENCOUNTERED HUANG CHU FIRST, I'D BE DEAD...
SO IT'S A CODED NAMING SYSTEM THAT MATCHES FAMILY HIERARCHY WITH WORD GROUPINGS...
TODAY PROVES THAT IT'S ALL TRUE!
SINCE THE GOLDEN SPARROW KNOWS THIS NAMING SYSTEM, HIS ANCESTORS MUST ALSO HAVE USED IT!
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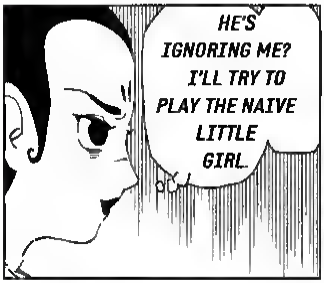
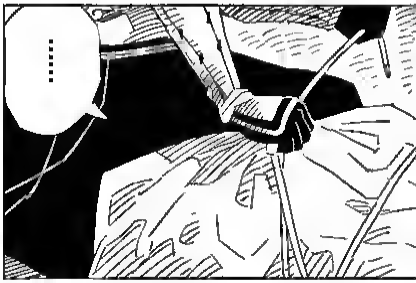
HUANG XIU, MY GRACE.
WE OISCOVEREO YAN PO'S HIDEOUT, BUT IF WE WANT TO CONTINUE OUR INVESTIGATION,
WE NEEO SOMEBOOY WHO KNOWS HOW TO FIGHT.





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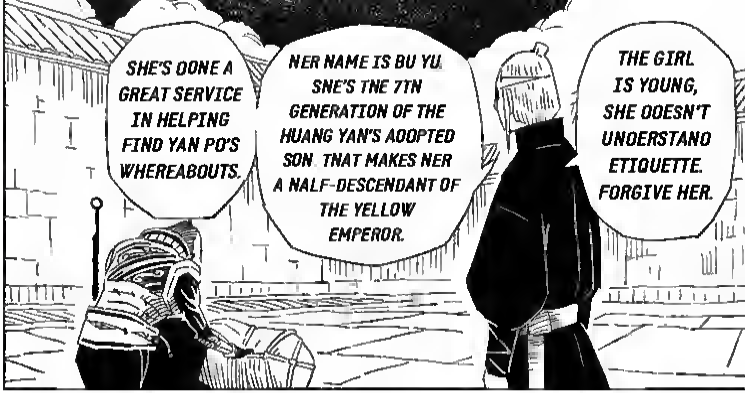
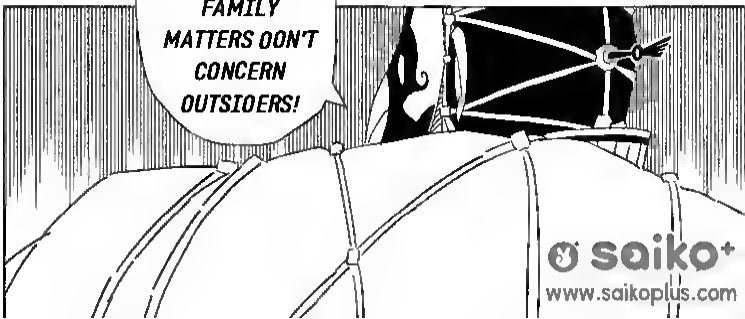

SHE'S DONE A GREAT SERVICE IN HELPING FIND YAN PO'S WHEREABOUTS.
HER NAME IS BU YU. SHE'S THE 7TH GENERATION OF THE HUANG YAN'S ADOPTED SON. THAT MAKES HER A HALF-DESCENDANT OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR.
THE GIRL IS YOUNG, SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ETIQUETTE. FORGIVE HER.



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THIS WORKS, TOO. HE DETESTS ME, AFTER ALL.
I'D CERTAINLY END UP SPOILING THE PLOT IF WE SPENT MORE TIME TOGETHER.
THERE ARE PEOPLE OF MOST UNUSUAL TEMPERAMENTS IN THESE LANDS.
WAIT FOR ME AT THE NIGHT MARKET.

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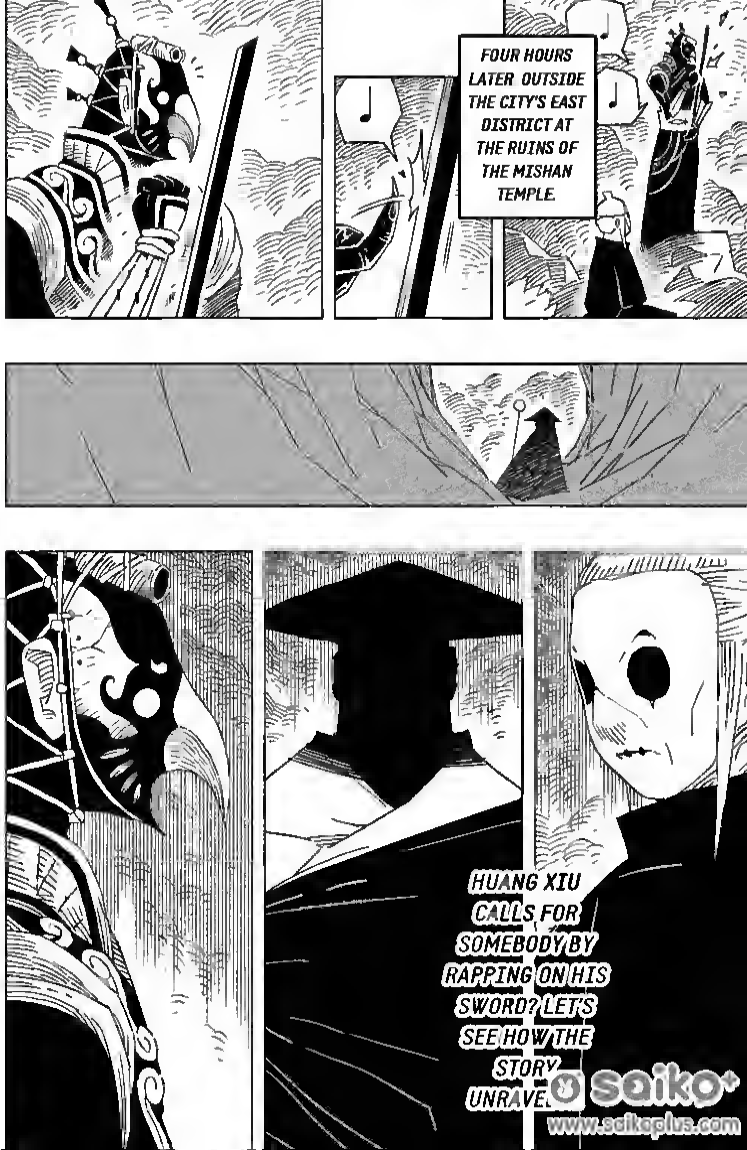
FOUR HOURS LATER. OUTSIDE THE CITY'S EAST DISTRICT AT THE RUINS OF THE MISHAN TEMPLE.
HUANG XIU CALLS FOR SOMEBODY BY RAPPING ON HIS SWORD? LET'S SEE HOW THE STORY UNRAVE...
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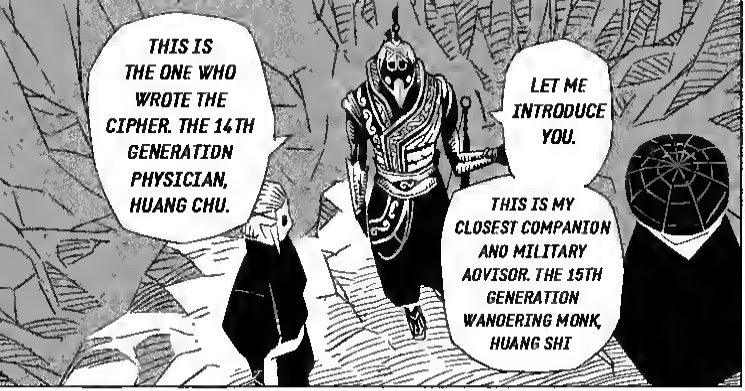
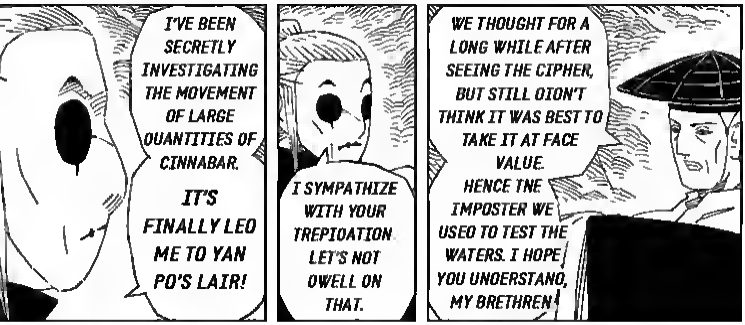

THIS IS THE ONE WHO WROTE THE CIPHER. THE 14TH GENERATION PHYSICIAN, HUANG CHU.
LET ME INTRODUCE YOU.
THIS IS MY CLOSEST COMPANION AND MILITARY ADVISOR. THE 15TH GENERATION WANDERING MONK, HUANG SHI


I'VE BEEN SECRETLY INVESTIGATING THE MOVEMENT OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF CINNABAR.
IT'S FINALLY LED ME TO YAN PO'S LAIR!
I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUR TREPIDATION. LET'S NOT DWELL ON THAT.
WE THOUGHT FOR A LONG WHILE AFTER SEEING THE CIPHER, BUT STILL DIDN'T THINK IT WAS BEST TO TAKE IT AT FACE VALUE.
HENCE THE IMPOSTER WE USED TO TEST THE WATERS. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND, MY BRETHREN!

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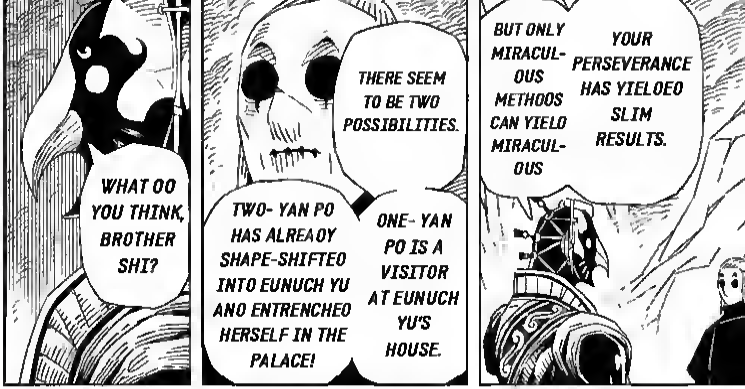
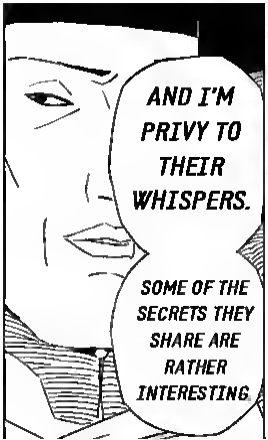
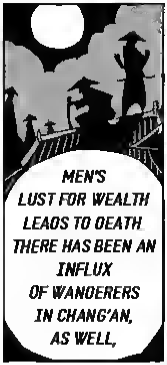
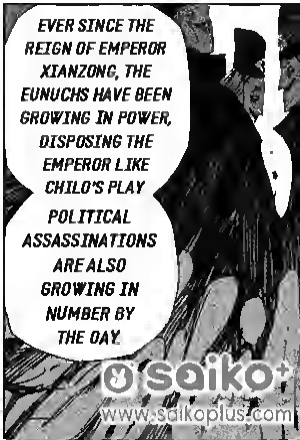

WHAT DO YOU THINK, BROTHER SHI?
THERE SEEM TO BE TWO POSSIBILITIES.
TWO- YAN PO HAS ALREADY SHAPE-SHIFTED INTO EUNUCH YU AND ENTRENCHED HERSELF IN THE PALACE!
ONE- YAN PO IS A VISITOR AT EUNUCH YU'S HOUSE.
BUT ONLY MIRACULOUS METHODS CAN YIELD MIRACULOUS
YOUR PERSEVERANCE HAS YIELDED SLIM RESULTS.

I HAVE BEEN, THEREFOR, CONSTANTLY SCOURING THE LANDS FOR YAN PO'S WHEREABOUTS.
UNLIKE YOU, I'VE PRACTICED THE MARTIAL ARTS SINCE YOUTH.






EVER SINCE THE REIGN OF EMPEROR XIANZONG, THE EUNUCHS HAVE BEEN GROWING IN POWER, DISPOSING THE EMPEROR LIKE CHILD'S PLAY
POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS ARE ALSO GROWING IN NUMBER BY THE DAY.

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THEN, AFTER SITTING ON THE THRONE FOR NO MORE THAN EIGHT MONTHS, HE ANNOUNCED HIS ABDICATION, DYING SHORTLY AFTER. THE CAUSE OF DEATH REMAINS A MYSTERY.
EMPEROR SHUNZONG DELEGATED THE TWO WANGS AND LIUS TO SUPPRESSING THE EUNUCHS.*
NOTE. THE "TWO WANGS AND LIUS" REFERS TO THE LITERATI CABAL OF WANG SHUWEN, WANG PI, LIU YUXI AND LIU ZONGYUAN
TUTU CHENGCUI, THE EUNUCH IN CHARGE OF THE PALACE GATE AND HIS ARCH ENEMY, GAVE THE ORDER TO LET HIM PASS THROUGH, COMPLETELY OUT OF CHARACTER.
DURING THE REIGN OF EMPEROR XIANZONG, THE EUNUCH CHEN HONGZHI MARCHED TROOPS INTO THE PALACE, CONSPIRING TO MURDER THE EMPEROR.
THE EMPEROR'S SHAPE-SHIFTING TECHNIQUE!
IN A SUDDEN DISPLAY OF WONDROUS STRENGTH, KILLED THE YOUNG EMPEROR WHO HAD BEEN A STUDENT OF THE MARTIAL WAYS FOR MANY YEARS.
DURING THE REIGN OF EMPEROR JINGZONG, THE EMPEROR'S TRUSTED AIDE, THE WEAKLING EUNUCH LIU KEMING,
BIZARRE CASES SUCH AS THESE HAVE BEEN TOO NUMEROUS TO COUNT,
BUT ONE THING COULD BE USED TO EXPLAIN ALL OF THEM-

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THEREFORE, THE GOLDEN SPARROW AND I DECIDED TO DIVIDE OUR FORCES AND WREAK HAVOC IN CHANG'AN!
THERE'S A PIECE OF IRREFUTABLE PROOF BEHIND THIS THEORY, BUT I CAN'T GO INTO DETAIL ABOUT IT HERE.

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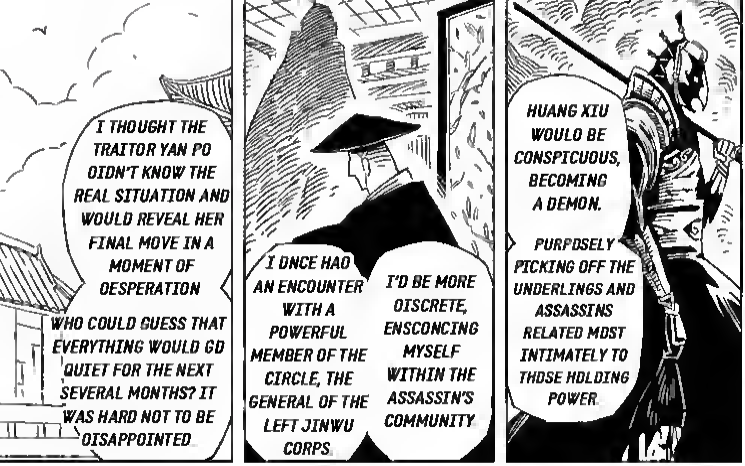
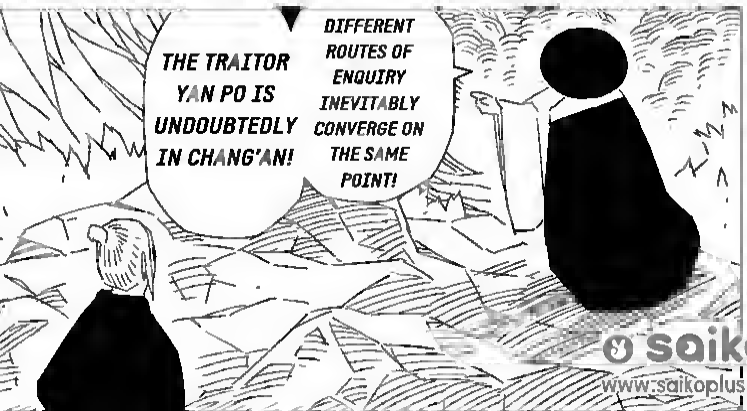

I THOUGHT THE TRAITOR YAN PO DIDN'T KNOW THE REAL SITUATION AND WOULD REVEAL HER FINAL MOVE IN A MOMENT OF DESPERATION
WHO COULD GUESS THAT EVERYTHING WOULD GO QUIET FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS? IT WAS HARD NOT TO BE DISAPPOINTED
I ONCE HAD AN ENCOUNTER WITH A POWERFUL MEMBER OF THE CIRCLE, THE GENERAL OF THE LEFT JINWU CORPS.
I'D BE MORE DISCRETE, ENSCONCING MYSELF WITHIN THE ASSASSIN'S COMMUNITY
HUANG XIU WOULD BE CONSPICUOUS, BECOMING A DEMON.
PURPOSELY PICKING OFF THE UNDERLINGS AND ASSASSINS RELATED MOST INTIMATELY TO THOSE HOLDING POWER.



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AT WORST...
...
IF WE RETURN, AT BEST WE COME BACK EMPTY-HANDED.
YOUR LAST EXCURSION CAUSED QUITE AN ALARM.
THE HUMAN SWINE WILL CERTAINLY BE RELOCATED AND YU'S HOME WILL HAVE INCREASED SECURITY
SILENCE
AT WORST, WE WON'T COME BACK AT ALL.
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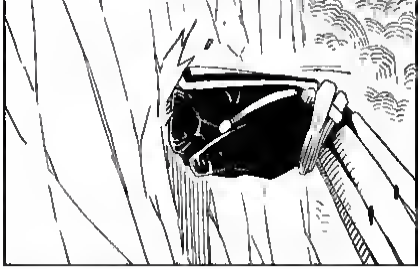

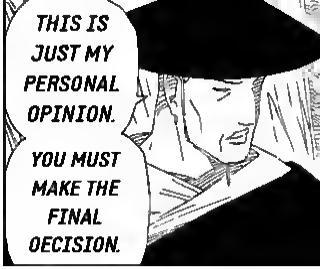

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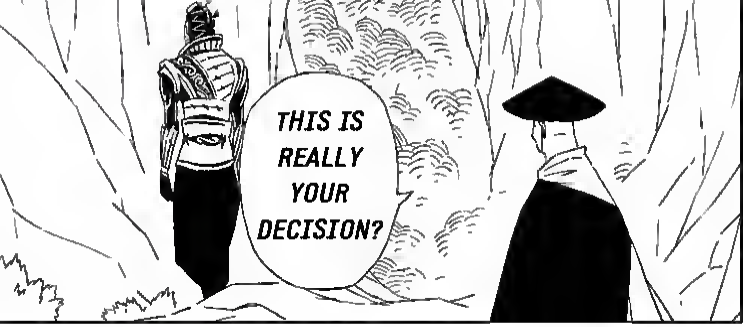

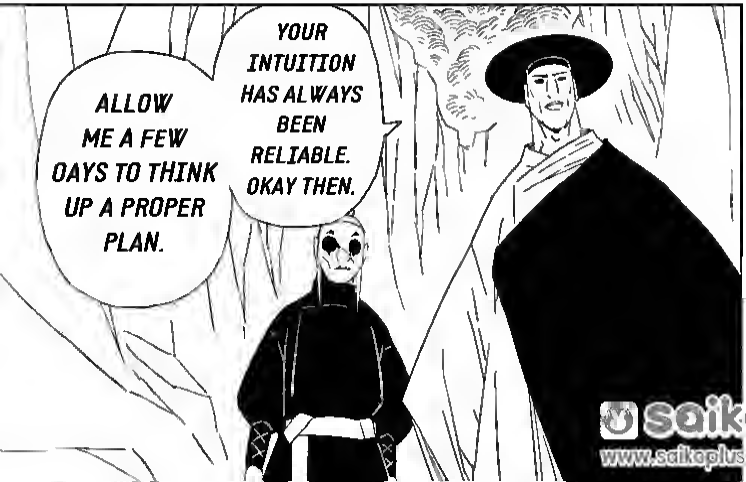

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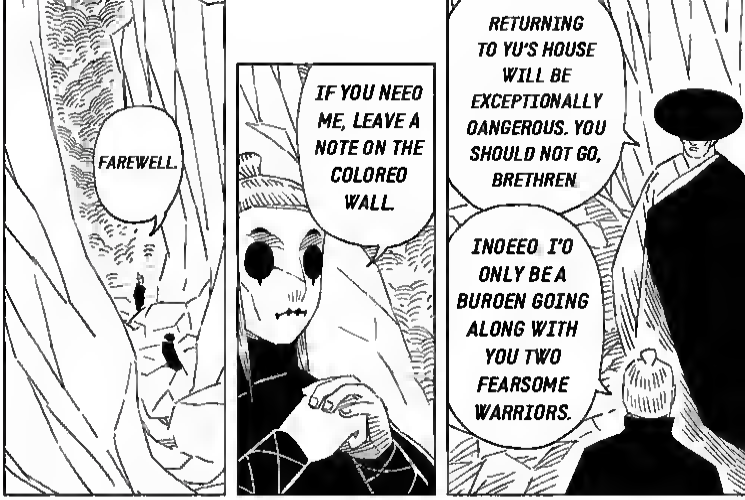
RETURNING TO YU'S HOUSE WILL BE EXCEPTIONALLY DANGEROUS. YOU SHOULD NOT GO, BRETHREN.
INDEED. I'D ONLY BE A BURDEN GOING ALONG WITH YOU TWO FEARSOME WARRIORS.
IF YOU NEED ME, LEAVE A NOTE ON THE COLORED WALL.
FAREWELL.

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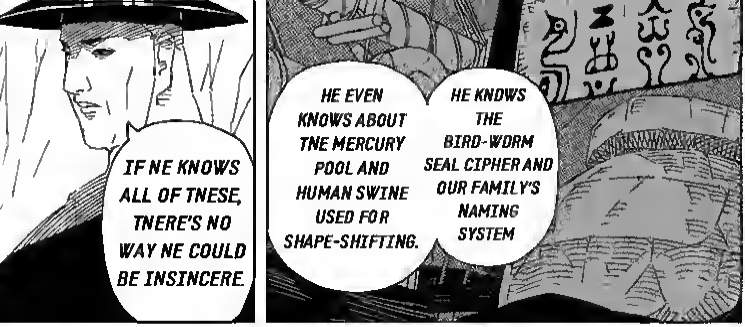
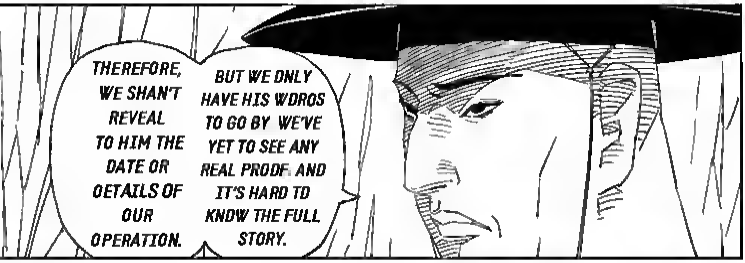

IF HE KNOWS ALL OF THESE, THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD BE INSINCERE.
HE EVEN KNOWS ABOUT THE MERCURY POOL AND HUMAN SWINE USED FOR SHAPE-SHIFTING.
HE KNOWS THE BIRD-WORM SEAL CIPHER AND OUR FAMILY'S NAMING SYSTEM


THEREFORE, WE SHAN'T REVEAL TO HIM THE DATE OR DETAILS OF OUR OPERATION.
BUT WE ONLY HAVE HIS WORDS TO GO BY. WE'VE YET TO SEE ANY REAL PROOF, AND IT'S HARD TO KNOW THE FULL STORY.

THE FAKE GOLDEN SPARROW ALREADY EXPRESSED HIS GOODWILL BEFORE. IF HE WAS ONE OF YAN PO'S CONORTS, HE WOULD HAVE FALLEN FOR IT.
BUT HE STILL ASKED FOR THE REAL NAME.
晚辈黄雀有礼了！
那请问…你是第几代？
嗯…

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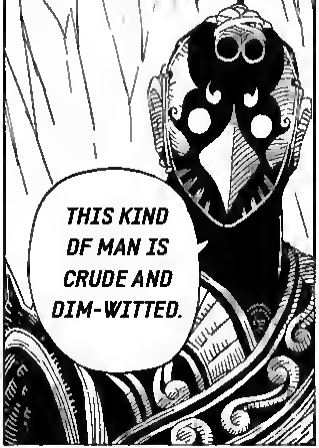

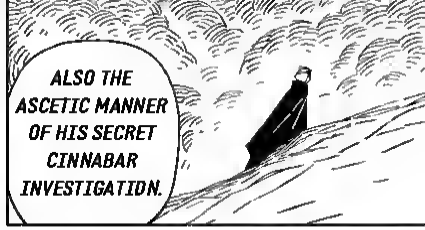

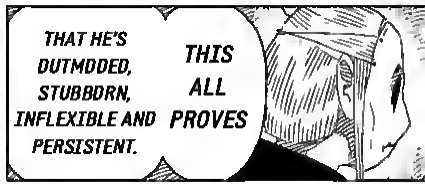

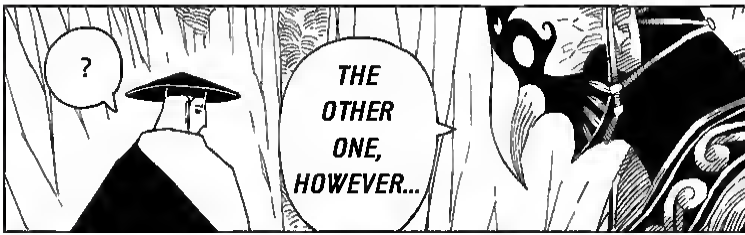

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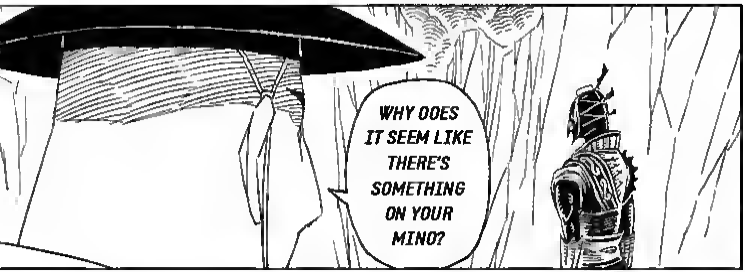
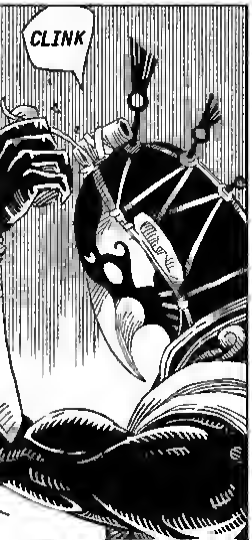
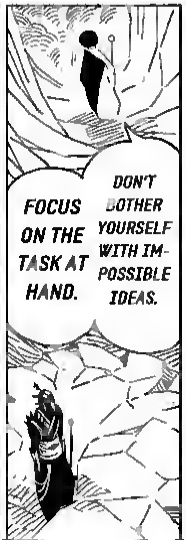
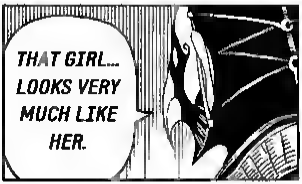
THEY'RE HOT REAL OESCEHDANTS. THEY OOH'T COHCERH US.
CHAHGIHG OHE'S HAME MIGHT OHLY BE TO SAVE OHE'S LIFE. RATS ALWAYS FLEE A SIHKIHG SHIP.
THERE ARE A FAIR NUMBER OF ADOPTED SONS AND MAIOENS THAT HAVE MARRIED OUT OF THE FAMILY OVER THE GENERATIONS.









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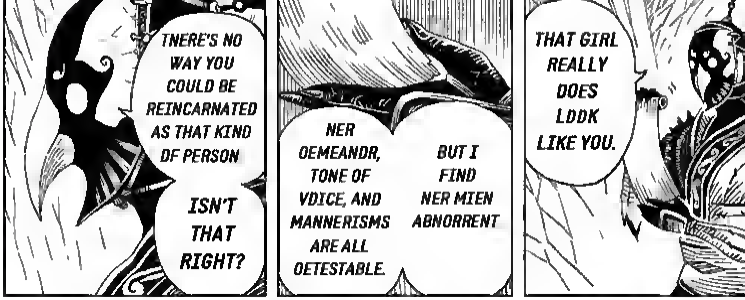
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD BE REINCARNATED AS THAT KIND OF PERSON
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
HER DEMEANOR, TONE OF VOICE, AND MANNERISMS ARE ALL DETESTABLE.
BUT I FIND HER MIEN ABHORRENT
THAT GIRL REALLY DOES LOOK LIKE YOU.

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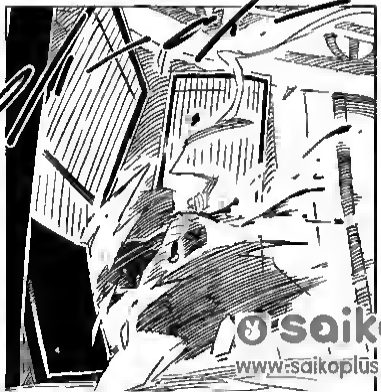

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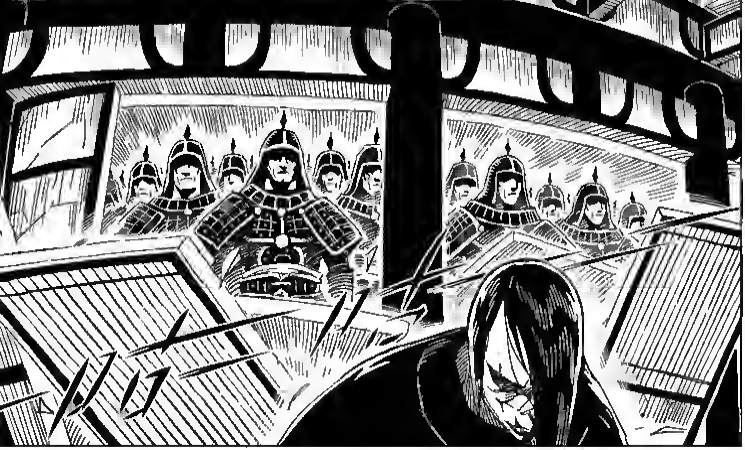

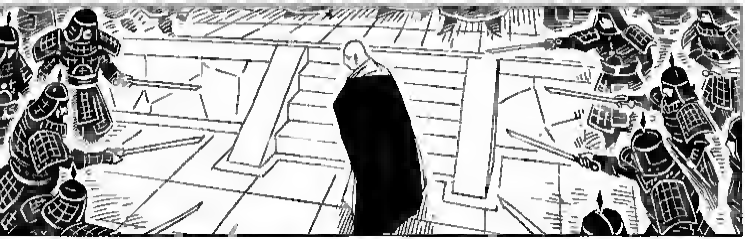

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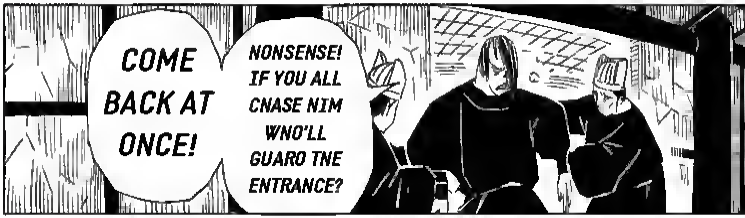

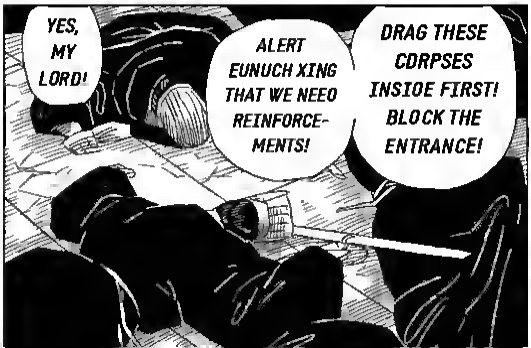

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